



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

April 4, 2003

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is a flu-like, respiratory illness, probably caused by a virus. Since Mid-February, the World Health Organization has been investigating outbreaks of SARS in Hanoi, Vietnam, Singapore, and in Hong Kong and the mainland province of Guangdong in the Peoples' Republic of China. Suspect cases have now been reported in most countries, including the United States.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A fever over 100.4 degrees which lasts for several days, coughing, and shortness of breath. Other possible symptoms include headache, muscular stiffness, loss of appetite, confusion, rash and diarrhea.

Q: How quickly can someone get the disease after being exposed to it?

One to seven days (average of 4 days).

Q: How does someone catch it?

It appears to spread through close contact, such as between family members or between patient and doctor. It is probably spread through coughing, sneezing, and other contact with nasal fluids.

Q: Will I catch SARS from a person who recently traveled to Asia?

Healthy individuals who return from affected areas are NOT infectious and CANNOT transmit the disease to anyone else. There is no reason to avoid healthy individuals who have recently traveled to Asia. There have been NO cases of community-acquired SARS in the United States. That means that no travelers have returned, become sick, and then infected coworkers or schoolmates. If an individual returned from Hanoi, Vietnam, Singapore, or Hong Kong (or the mainland province of China known as Guangdong) within the past 10 days, and if they develop a fever of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or above, they should not go to school or to work, and should notify their physician.

Q: What causes it?

The exact cause is unknown. It is probably caused by a virus.

Q: What should I do if I suspect I have SARS?

First, if you have not traveled to Asia in the past 10 days, or lived with or cared for someone who is ill with SARS, then you are not likely to have SARS. If you have traveled to Asia in the past 10 days, and currently have a high fever and/or flu-like symptoms, you should see a doctor as soon as possible. Remember to tell the doctor about your recent travel.

Q. What can I do to prevent the spread of SARS?

Careful hand washing with soap and water can help reduce the spread of respiratory illness including influenza and the common cold. Wash your hands after sneezing, coughing, blowing your nose, etc.

Q: Are there any cases of SARS in the United States?

It is difficult to tell who has SARS and who has a cold or flu because we do not yet know what causes SARS. The Centers for Disease Control reports that there are about 100 suspect cases of SARS being investigated in the US.

Q: What are the chances of recovering from SARS?

In the United States, no one has died from SARS. In the rest of the world, about 3% of cases are fatal.

Q: Is it dangerous to travel to Asia? Should I cancel my trip?

Here are the opinions of two highly respected health organizations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is advising that people traveling to Hong Kong or Guangdong Province China consider postponing all but essential travel. However, this advisory does not apply to those passengers simply transiting through airports in Hong Kong or Guangdong Province China. WHO does not consider that the small health risk attributable to SARS significantly increases the health risk associated with travel to any other destination.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advises postponing nonessential travel to mainland China, Hong Kong, Hanoi, Vietnam, or Singapore until further notice.

Q: What should I do if I have recently traveled to a country where cases of SARS have been reported?

You should monitor your own health for 10 days following your return. If you become ill with a fever of over 100.4°F [$>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$] that is accompanied by a cough or difficulty breathing or that progresses to a cough and/or difficulty breathing, you should consult a health care provider. To help your health care provider make a diagnosis, tell him or her about any recent travel to regions where cases of SARS have been reported and whether you were in contact with someone who had these symptoms.

Please visit www.cdc.gov, www.who.int, contact your Local Health Department, or the Utah Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology at (801) 538-6191 if you want more information.